



COMMITTEE FOR THE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

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August 25, 1993

Dr, Maxine Singer
Carnegie Institution of Washington
1530 P.St.,N.W.
Washington DC 20005

Dear Dr. Singer,

In the past year, three major studies¹ have strongly criticized the way that the Federal government supports and uses science related to the environment. They found a **lack of leadership** and national planning, **weak linkages** between science and policy, neglect of **long term research**, insufficient attention to **data management** and a tremendous need for improved **education and training**, and especially **underfunding** of all sciences - particularly biological and social sciences, engineering, and crossdisciplinary approaches. These deficiencies are particularly troubling as the world's environmental problems grow increasingly serious and expensive.

After nearly four years of development, our organization of some 6,000 scientists, educators, decisionmakers and other citizens has proposed the creation of a **National Institute for the Environment (NIE)** as a way to help solve these problems. The NIE would be a non-regulatory, granting agency to provide the resources for science to understand the causes and consequences of environmental degradation and to propose solutions and for communicating this knowledge with decisionmakers. Through research, the NIE would foster the health of the environment as the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has aided human health.

Congressman George Brown (D-CA), Chairman of the House Science Committee and Jim Saxton (D-NJ) and 38 other Members of Congress from both parties recently introduced legislation (H.R. 2918) to establish the NIE. A summary of this legislation is enclosed.

The NIE would have a mission: *To improve the scientific basis for making decisions on environmental issues.*

The goals of the NIE would be to:

Increase scientific understanding of environmental issues by supporting credible, problem-focused research;

¹National Commission on the Environment; Carnegie Commission on Science, Technology, and Government; National Academy of Sciences/National Research Council Committee on Environmental Research

Enhance decision making by comprehensive assessment of current environmental knowledge;

Enlarge access to environmental information and better communicate scientific and technological results;

Strengthen capacity to address environmental issues by sponsoring higher education and training.

Its research funding would be organized around:

- environmental resources -- inventories, monitoring and characterization,
- environmental systems -- mechanisms, process and effects, and
- environmental sustainability -- strategies, technologies and solutions.

Funding would be based on **priorities** established by a multi-stakeholder process including researchers and users of scientific information. Scientists and engineers from **any discipline** or combination of disciplines that can provide needed knowledge would be eligible to compete for **peer-reviewed funding**.

The NIE is meant to complement, not replace, existing agencies by integrating its four functions and supporting research and education of a more cross-cutting nature than is presently supported by management and regulatory agencies. By providing a forum for environmental research priorities to be set, **it should lead to more environmental issues being addressed and ultimately enlarge the funding base for environmental research and education**. Additionally, the NIE will provide a focal point for the U.S. to participate in **international scientific endeavors** on global issues. More details are contained in the accompanying enclosures.

The concept of a National Institute for the Environment has been endorsed by more than 70 scientific professional societies and research organizations. We invite you to be a partner in building the NIE. We need you to help shape the NIE and to help promote the concept. **We ask that your organization also consider endorsing the NIE.** A sample resolution is enclosed.

Please look at the enclosed materials, and let us know what you think. Should you have any questions or comments or require additional information, please contact Dr. David Blockstein at (202) 628-4303.

Thank you for your interest. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Stephen P. Hubbell, Ph.D.
Chairman